

ing my best clothes, my scratchy gabardines. I couldn't get comfortable. I kept trying to smile back but I was holding my breath like I was about to hear a sermon. Sometimes I looked at my picture to remind myself how happy I was. There I stood, holding my new purse and smiling. Everything was covered with dew and the sunlight was shining down through the boughs of the trees so you could see it like pencils on the air, shining pencils. Oh, it looked nice—in the picture. But I knew I couldn't go smiling through the rest of my life with a nice little Charlie Chaplin. Now—I got a bed, and a sink, and a chair, and a window. What more do I need? Everyplace is the same.

RONNIE. No.

MATTIE. And so is everybody.

→ RONNIE. I'll never be like you. *(Pause.)* There's a whole mysterious country out there, Mattie, and I'm going to see it all. As soon as I can, I'm leaving. I'm going to see Chicago and New York—the big cities up North where everybody stays up all night long drinking black coffee. Life's more serious up there. I've heard those all-night programs where people phone in and talk about their problems. They've got a lot of serious problems up there, that's all I've got to say. I want to see Grand Central Station, the crossroads of America, and the tallest buildings in the world. Sky-writing floating on the clouds above the buildings all day long. See Tin Pan Alley and Times Square and newsboys everywhere you look and gangsters and baseball players. People talk in newspaper headlines. Everyplace is going out of business, and everybody can be bought. Or I might go to California, where the sun's always hot and you can see the movie stars walk into the drugstore and buy aspirin just like normal people. I might go there—I might—there's orange groves and private eyes, and they say it never rains. Or I might go down South, where people burn crosses

on the lawns, and hide their idiot sons in the attic. To Florida, where the hotels look like big white wedding cakes, and millionaires drive down the boulevards with the top down, smoking cigars. Moonlight and palm trees and waterspouts! Things I never saw before! Or I might even go to Georgia, where nobody ever goes. To the mountains, where it's always raining cats and dogs, and the hillbillies play their fiddles and drink moonshine. They marry down there when they're eleven years old. You don't know what you might do down there! The rain pours down and there's a house I heard about where there's no more law of gravity and water runs uphill. Wonderful things! Wonderful things all over America! And I'm going to see them all. Just let me be anyplace but here—in Oklahoma. *(Opera has been heard as she speaks, rising in volume. As she finishes, it reaches a finale. The stage darkens.)* ←